DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 999 CS 508 452

AUTHOR Derryberry, Bob R.
TITLE Developing Ideas through Forensics.
PUB DATE 19 Nov 93
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (79th, Miami Beach, FL, November 18-21, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Communication Skills; *Debate; Higher Education; *Speech Communication; Writing Processes
IDENTIFIERS Debate Tournaments; *Idea Generation; *Speaking Thinking Relationship

ABSTRACT

If forensic activity is to contribute to student growth and development, careful attention must be given to training and experience in developing ideas. Borrowing from the time-honored premise of invention, forensics educators should highlight argument construction as a foundation in speechwriting practices. Some of the essential premises or reminders to assist in the production of creative ideas that comprise forensic events include the significance of speaker choices, the use of pro-con reasoning, the relationship of invention and organization, the role of listeners in invention, and the complementary natures of idea generation and effective communication. To generate pedagogical applications and a clearer focus upon invention, the following activities can be used by forensics educators: (1) encourage students to declare and discuss the essential arguments of prepared contest speeches at periodic stages in the preparation process; (2) urge students to recall and evaluate the arguments that comprise limited preparation and impromptu event performances; (3) ask students to engage in brainstorming to determine reasons for and against a proposed thesis before the final position is developed; (4) ask students to identify values and personal beliefs that are chosen and refined through the preparation processes of a specific event; and (5) direct students to explore the use of effective delivery as a means of strengthening invention within prepared speeches. (Contains 15 references.) (RS)

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ED 366 999

DEVELOPING IDEAS THROUGH FORENSICS

Bob R. Derryberry

Southwest Baptist University

Presented at the Seventy-Ninth Annual Meeting of the

Speech Communication Association

November 19, 1993

Miami Beach, Florida

CS508452

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Developing Ideas through Forensics

Directors and participants in forensic education often emphasize potential benefits to be derived from speech competition, and highlighted educational values become especially convincing when they are linked to sound academic principles and practices. Of course, educators and competitors need to demonstrate objectivity and even caution as developmental outcomes are ascribed to forensics. Appropriately, Ron Allen, Clay Willmington, and Jo Sprague (1991) explain that presenting forensic participation as the "only" promoter of goals such as social development or self-realization would be a mistake (p. 388). However, with an emphasis upon factors that "contribute" to student growth, numerous benefits of forensic involvement can rightfully be emphasized. Broadly, but importantly, Allen and his colleagues note that forensics "can also contribute to the intellectual growth of students by teaching them to think rationally, communicate effectively, and make responsible judgments" (p. 388).

Additionally, within the forensic community, theoretical instruction is often combined with student experiences and perspectives to emphasize the composite value of forensics. James McBath's essay of 1984 clarifying a rationale for forensics includes a wide range of values with direct and indirect application to student development. Noted advantages include the opportunity to foster skills needed by society, preparation for diverse professional careers, the chance to build

social skills, the means for clarifying individual values, and the environment for enhanced academic experience. From the student perspective, McBath's evaluation concludes that "a good forensics program becomes a kind of ongoing honors course for academically talented students" (p. 6).

With an appropriate emphasis upon broad benefits available to participants in forensics, speech educators need to foster a clear understanding of specific rhetorical dimensions that are essential in achieving promoted values. While practical benefits such as the development of effective delivery skills, mastery of the ability to think and respond under pressure, and the command of effective language proficiency are often recognized, the position of this essay is that substantive rhetorical elements must comprise the foundation of the activity. Specifically, this presentation will explore the development of ideas as a fundamental premise of the forensic experience. To accomplish this goal, discussion will be given to the challenge of idea development and the concept of invention as they relate to forensic preparation. Final exploration will then focus upon concepts and practices that can strengthen the process of invention in forensic preparation.

The Challenge of Idea Development

Since ideas comprise the "heart" of what competitive speakers present, speech educators must not fail to emphasize their production and management in forensic entries. Frequently, in the haste to determine that speaker presentations are technically documented and delivered with competitive polish, educators and contestants can easily neglect the foundations of speeches. Particularly, the personal

discovery of this educator is that as speakers research and compose messages for events such as persuasion, informative speaking, rhetorical criticism, and even debate case construction, arguments and claims often remain unclear, even to the speaker. Therefore, one of the most probing directions one can present to the competitive speechwriter is to list and explain the major arguments of a specific contest message without the aid of notes or manuscript. The verbalizations that usually follow demonstrate a search to discover and clarify as students ask: "Do you mean what I am really trying to show or prove in this speech?" In such encounters, students come face to face with the process of inventing and arranging the ideas and arguments they want to communicate.

Essential to our pedagogical foundation in forensics is the premise that ideas have consequences for the speakers who conceive and develop them and for the listeners who respond in ways that are anticipated or unpredicted by the speaker. In fact, a major recommendation-goal of the National Developmental Forensic Conference of 1975 was that students should be provided the environment where they "are encouraged to develop positive attitudes toward the worth of ideas and toward themselves, other persons, and society at large" (p. 14). These conference participants of two decades ago stressed that speaker encounters and discoveries through forensics should assist students in linking ideas to life dimensions. In their recommendations, the educators recognized how the process of "inquiry into, and confrontation among, ideas and values inevitably must affect their [the students']

own conscious and unconscious choices of personal values, self-images, and world views" (p. 14).

Hence, an overriding value from forensic participation in invention processes is the challenging growth for speaker-citizens. Specifically, speaker activities such as brainstorming, research management, and the process of reshaping rhetorical positions and value interpretations become essential components of idea development. In everyday forensic experience, this discovery is exemplified by the student who reports, "I can't find documentation to support my earlier position, but I've found new information that has changed my entire thinking about my subject."

Identifying the Process

What comprises the creative activity of idea development for the forensic student? How can the educator-coach assist speakers with discoveries as they prepare manuscript events as well as limited preparation entries? First, the process of developing ideas recaptures the essence of the classical premise of invention. Appropriately, Paul Fritz and Richard L. Weaver, II (1984), reflecting the definition of J. H. Mackin, explain that the concept explores the foundation of ideas. "Invention," they note, "is the division of rhetoric which focuses on finding significant questions of an issue and discovering the appropriate arguments for proof and/or refutation" (p. 3).

From another perspective, James Herrick (1991) explains that the invention process is "coming up with arguments" to present in support of a claim while considering "the audience for which our arguments are intended" (p. 267). Herrick

further contends that an argument is set forth to reach or "persuade an audience--even if the audience consists only of a single individual--and this usually means that our arguments are adapted to that audience" (p. 267).

Certainly, the discovery of ideas must then emphasize the process of reason formation and reason giving that we label as argument. Appropriately, as Wayne Brockriede's essay clarifies, "arguments are in people and are what people see them to be, the idea of argument is an open concept" (p. 5). His discussion reminds us that argument is also defined as "a process whereby people reason their way from one set of problematic ideas to the choice of another" (p. 5).

The dependency of speech composition upon argument construction is clear and essential. As James Andrews (1990) observes, "any speech makes certain assertions about reality" (p. 47). The speaker must then design these assertions or conclusions to achieve listener acceptance. "The principal conclusion of the speech, along with the reasons that sustain that conclusion," Andrews notes, "is the argument of the speech" (p. 47).

In practical application to forensic preparation, a meaningful approach to idea discovery and development is to focus upon argument construction. If, for example, the contestant is writing a speech manuscript, segments of argument must emerge from the speaker's devotion to research and creative thought. Concepts then require strategic arrangement and the backing of details and evidence. Likewise, a major criterion in the evaluation of limited preparation events such as extemporaneous and impromptu speeches is that they also demonstrate clearly developed lines of

argument. Even interpretation entries must give attention to developed themes backed by a grasp of appropriate emphasis and subordination of literary elements.

Generating and Developing Ideas

Since idea creation is basic to effective oral communication and strong forensic entries, we need to explore essentials that encourage developing competitors to be productive speakers. Certainly, the discovery and arrangement of worthy concepts and claims must not be regarded as routine or automatic in the process of speech preparation. Particularly, forensic educators need to consistently monitor and scrutinize the substance of arguments within student speeches as events are created for competition.

Increasingly, my own coaching experience reveals that students often prefer an easy or quick route in determining claims and themes for entries. Even in writing full manuscript messages, research can easily focus upon a series of popular news articles supplying a novel title or an immediate organizational structure. The forensic speechwriter can also become so driven by time and competition demands that a systematic understanding and command of the problem selected for a speech are not completely developed. Thus, the following discussion explores some essential premises or reminders to assist in the production of creative ideas that comprise forensic events.

Making Foundational Choices

An initial requirement in the process of idea development is that emphasis must be placed upon the deliberate act of choice on the part of the speaker-performer. This factor is certainly critical in the preparation of all forensic events, and educator-coaches need to focus parts of writing and performance workshops upon the significance of personal responsibilities in determining arguments and literary choices. Even though competitive entries differ in goals and modes of performance, speaker decisions provide the clarity and impetus for success. As Robert Cathcart observes in his instruction for rhetorical analysis, "part of every message are the implicit or explicit arguments upholding the ideas, beliefs, and values which the speaker feels must be set forth to bring the listeners' perceptions in line with the speaker's" (p. 44). Clearly, the arguments that emerge in the development stage must spring from deliberate decisions on the part of the messenger. Regardless of the purpose in speaking, Cathcart's instruction can apply as he writes: "Every speaker must choose arguments and arrange them in an order suitable to the situation and satisfying to the audience" (p. 44).

As the speaker exercises essential choices, the importance of personal motivation for selecting and developing ideas must be recognized. If forensics is to serve as a realistic and creative arena where brainstorming and critical research are encouraged, competitors should be free to develop positions motivated from inward discoveries. Just as the interpretation student experiences far more growth from a personal commitment to a literary work than from a selection that is merely

assigned, the speaker needs to reflect rhetorical choices that are inwardly motivated. Early in public communication courses, educators usually stress the requirement of genuine concern as a prerequisite for developing ideas within a public message; but occasionally, forensic competitors can lose sight of the basic premise. However, the world of professional speechwriting provides a clear reminder of how this important requirement remains essential. For example, as a professional and veteran speechwriter, Phil Thiebert (1993) relates: "I've often talked to chief executives and they want to know what they should say. That's easy. Tell the audience what you really believe in your heart" (p. 3). His advice to professionals is also vital for the forensic contestant when he writes: "If you're giving a speech, dig down deep, find out what your beliefs really are, and hit your audience between the eyes with them" (p. 3).

Thomas Hollihan and Patricia Riley's advice for debate speakers underscores the necessity of inward motivation for speaking when they write that "academic debate needs to expand its repertoire of events so that students have the opportunity to argue positions that they really believe, and explore the reasons behind their own personal values" (p. 403). They also contend that debate speakers need opportunities to speak with a variety of audiences (p. 403). Such experiences can enhance the fields of individual concern from which speakers formulate personal choices and rhetorical positions; these experiences can also motivate speakers to adapt choices and arguments to diverse recipients as arguments are formulated.

Using Pro and Con Reasoning to Stimulate Ideas

An effective stimulus encouraging the invention and testing of ideas is the long-recognized practice of debating or reasoning from pro and con positions or multiple sides of an issue. Indeed, since early Greek and Roman treatises, scholarship has recognized the approach, but occasionally we rediscover the enduring wisdom of this classical yet modern method.

Before our forensic organizations applaud traditional intercollegiate debate practices for fulfilling the essence of this reasoning format, we should examine our activity through the light of interpretations from scholarship outside our competitive ranks. One helpful source of insight is provided by Thomas Sloane (1989), who notes that his emphasis upon rediscovering pro-con debate should not be misunderstood. He explains:

> I am not saying to the composition teacher, Get thee to a debate contest if you want to learn how to teach your students how to write or speak. The modern debate contests I have seen are little more than formalist rituals in communication, eristic aimed at judges not juries. (p. 470).

In essence, Sloane urges the communicator to understand the value of debating pro and con positions as a means of stimulating invention. He writes: "One must, that is, debate both sides--or, for that matter, all sides--of any case or one's inventio will remain not fully invented" (p. 462). Sloane emphasizes the uniqueness of pro-con

debating to rhetoric and affirms the advantages of the practice as a writer's starting point. But his final advantage is that "pro and con reasoning is humanizing" (p. 471). He concludes that "it is achieved in part by teaching the willingness and the wit to argue both or for that matter all sides, never avoiding the advocacy of the very side the dogmatics would suppress" (p. 472).

Directly translated into forensic preparation and experience, the historic practice of pro-con reasoning can serve to motivate idea discovery. Even more important, however, the practice can assist speakers to develop and formulate positions for advocacy based upon systematic thought, reasoning, and commitment.

Unifying Invention and Organization in Idea Management

The rhetorical elements of invention and disposition are usually considered as two distinct steps in the speech-constructing process. However, as Mark Knapp and James McCroskey (1966) have observed, an important pedagogical step can be taken by visualizing the two concepts as integrated actions. Clearly, as these authors have noted, "the fact that dispositio cannot be divorced from inventio has pedagogical as well as theoretical implications" (p. 44).

But how does an emphasis upon the close link of invention and arrangement affect the development of ideas for forensic speech composition? Often, in an effort to be systematic in speech preparation, the goal of speakers is to adhere to a rigid process. Although students may feel comfortable with a formula for preparation, valuable discoveries can be lost by insisting that one process always precedes the other. In the real world of prepared speechwriting and speaking with limited

preparation, students discover that the arrangement of ideas must be considered as part of the invention process. As Knapp and McCroskey have observed, "while dispositio has a function outside inventio, if the discourse is to be audience-centered, the function of dispositio within inventio must not be overlooked" (p. 44). For example, these educators stress that "a poor job of organization may actually be a manifestation of an insufficient grasp of inventional processes" (p. 44).

Thus, instead of encouraging competitive speakers to follow rigid steps in idea management, speech educators may enhance speaker creativity and productivity by stressing a holistic approach to speech composition. For the developing and creative speaker, the invention process can embrace idea conceptualization and arrangement as a united process.

Visualizing Listeners in the Inventive Process

Audience awareness must not be neglected in the invention process of forensic events. Since the format of tournament settings is designed to manage competition, the focus upon listeners as a critical source of idea stimulation for speakers can be easily overlooked. Often, my observation is that members of my teams become so preoccupied with ascertaining judging styles and preferences that the challenge of creating arguments adjusted to a variety of responsible listeners is neglected.

Specifically, as arguments and literary choices are determined for contest entries, they should be created from listener viewpoints. Further, speakers and interpreters need to visualize a variety of listeners sharing the communication

process. The interpreter may not have the option of selecting the professor of literature as the only critic for a round of dramatic interpretation competition; and as Stanley Rives has noted, the notion "that only a debate judge is qualified to judge a debate must be abandoned" (p. 125). My experience affirms that speakers are far more creative with invention processes when a range of judging reactions are anticipated. For example, when the informative speaker realizes that a prepared speech will be delivered for a debate coach as well as fellow students gathered for a chapel convocation, the consideration of audiences in the invention process becomes more clearly apparent as well as stimulating.

Therefore, instead of encouraging contest speakers to focus upon what may win a ballot or high ranks in a round, my contention is that forensic educators need to emphasize the significance of the audience as an important aspect of invention. Such a focus directs the scrutiny of raw material in search of claims that are personal efforts on the part of a speaker to influence and respond to listeners. As Knapp and McCroskey noted in a discussion of the function of invention and disposition, the speaker "must discover data and warrants that will enable him to invent arguments that will secure audience acceptance of his central idea" (p. 17).

Linking Invention and Communication

Finally, an additional means of stimulating idea development through forensics is to emphasize the interrelationship between the invention of concept-claims and compelling communication. Although the suggestion may initially appear simplistic, it can encourage essential discoveries for developing speakers.

While the purpose of this essay is not to review the historic attempts to separate or unify rhetorical canons, the emphasis is that stronger speeches can develop by stressing the interdependency of the two elements. Further, with this orientation, the forensic educator has opportunities to strengthen idea production while contributing to student understanding and application of rhetorical principles.

By realizing how the invention of ideas and their effective presentation are mutually dependent, forensic participants are able to acquire the benefits of joint stimulation of the two dimensions. Authors Charles Kneupper and Floyd Anderson (1980) explain the dynamics of allowing one element to affect the other when they write that "eloquence requires wisdom" and "wisdom would not exist without eloquence" (p. 321). After calling for a rejection of the "expression/substance" dichotomy, the authors explain that "a theoretical unification of wisdom and eloquence must deal with the substance of discourse and its expression as inseparable" (p. 321).

The forensic educator-coach can then insist that invention in speech composition involves more than merely collecting and artfully presenting ideas gathered through research channels. Specifically, speeches depend upon invention developed through intense thought, research, and creative processes. While generated ideas require effective communication for claims to be clear and compelling, skillful delivery that is not linked to a command of knowledge and research demonstrates a deficient invention as a foundation for speaking. As the orator Cicero noted in Book I of his De Oratore, without knowledge and

understanding, "there must be something empty and almost childish in the [speaker's] utterance" (p. 17).

Thus, by insisting that substance and eloquent expression are complementary essentials, forensic speakers can reach higher goals as competitors and communicators. As Kneupper and Anderson have noted, "renewed concern with rhetorical invention emphasizes the primacy of substance in discourse and will enhance both pedagogy and theory by complementing speech communication's concern with eloquence" (p. 326).

Conclusion and Recommendations

If forensic activity is to contribute to student growth and development, careful attention must be given to training and experience in developing ideas. Borrowing from the time-honored premise of invention, this essay has urged forensic educators to highlight argument construction as a foundation in speechwriting practices. To encourage invention of ideas, exploration has been given to the significance of speaker choices, the use of pro-con reasoning, the relationship of invention and organization, the role of listeners in invention, and the complementary natures of idea generation and effective communication. Finally, to generate pedagogical applications and a clearer focus upon invention, the following activities are offered for potential use by forensic educators:

1. Encourage students to declare and discuss the essential arguments of prepared contest speeches at periodic stages in the preparation process.

2. Following workshop sessions and tournament competition, urge students to recall and evaluate the arguments that comprise limited preparation and impromptu event performances.

3. Ask students to engage in brainstorming to determine reasons for and against a proposed thesis before the final position for a manuscript speech is developed.

4. Conduct work sessions that emphasize the integration of invention and organization as overlapping inventive divisions. Allow organizational discoveries to foster further idea development.

5. Ask students to identify values and personal beliefs that are chosen and refined through the preparation processes of a specific event.

6. Arrange for speech team members to deliver prepared speeches to diverse audiences and evaluate the impact of feedback as a source of idea refinement and manuscript modification.

7. Finally, direct students to explore the use of effective delivery as a means of strengthening invention within prepared speeches and interpretation performances. Note especially the role of delivery in determining strengths and weaknesses of arguments and their supporting structures.

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